



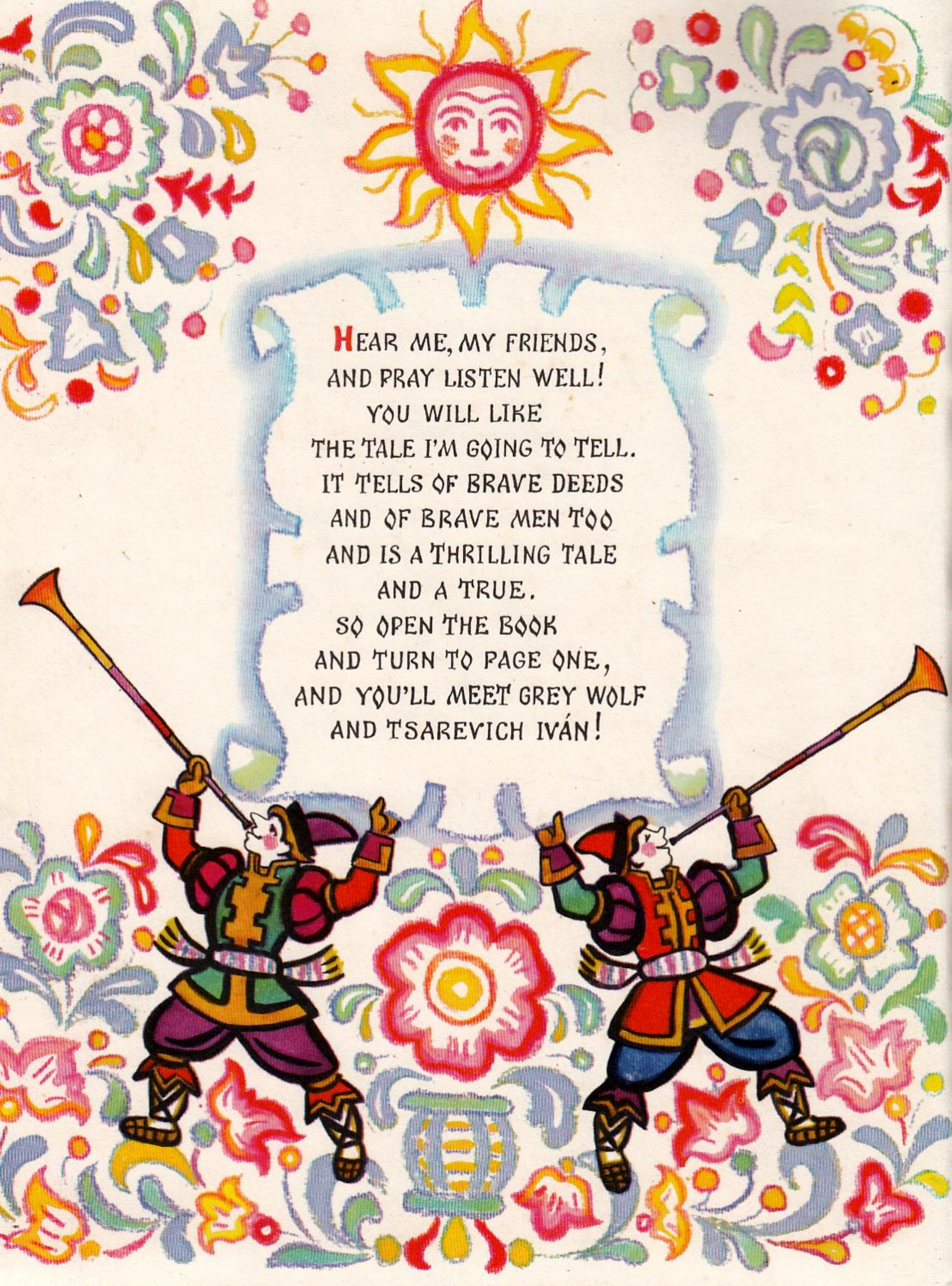
The Tale
of
Tsarevich Ivan
and
Grey Wolf

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HEAR ME, MY FRIENDS,
AND PRAY LISTEN WELL!

YOU WILL LIKE
THE TALE I'M GOING TO TELL.
IT TELLS OF BRAVE DEEDS
AND OF BRAVE MEN TOO
AND IS A THRILLING TALE
AND A TRUE.

SO OPEN THE BOOK
AND TURN TO PAGE ONE,
AND YOU'LL MEET GREY WOLF
AND TSAREVICH IVÁN!







The Tale of Tsarevich Ivan and Grey Wolf

Adapted by Viktor Vazhdayer

Drawings by N. Kochergin

Retold in English
by Irina Zheleznova







here was once a tsar who had three sons the youngest of whom was called Tsarevich Ivan.

Now, the tsar had a garden so beautiful that even if you went all over the world and searched in every tsardom you could not find any to equal it! And in that most beautiful garden grew the most beautiful trees of which the most beautiful of all was an apple tree that bore golden apples.

The tsar loved his garden and the apple tree that bore golden apples more than anything on earth.

Now, of all strange things to happen, someone began visiting the garden at night and stealing the golden apples, but who it was none knew or could guess.



Not a morning passed but the tsar would come to his garden and up to his beloved apple tree and stand there weeping bitter tears, for one apple was sure to be missing every time.

The tsar spoke sternly to his watchmen and his gardeners and he bade them never to close their eyes but to watch over the apple tree day and night.

But though the watchmen and the gardeners did their best and watched the apple tree as closely as they could



someone would come at night without their ever seeing him and steal one of the golden apples.

And in the morning the tsar would stand there and weep and wipe the tears away with his handkerchief.

Whether a long time passed by or a short nobody knows, but the tsar could bear it no longer. He called his sons to his side and said to them:

“Listen to me, my sons, and hear what I say. You know as well as I do that the watchmen and gardeners are

but servants and that one can ask of them so much and no more. But you are my own brave sons, and the apple tree that bears the golden apples is as dear to you as it is to me, so surely you will keep my garden safe from thieves! And I promise you this: he who catches the thief will get half my tsardom now and the other half after I die."

The three sons bowed to the tsar and said:

"Do not grieve, Father, and be at peace. We will catch the thief!"

Night came, and the eldest of the tsar's three sons prepared to go to the garden to keep watch over the apple tree.

"The thief is as good as caught and waiting to be punished now, Father," said he to the tsar. "For whatever I promise to do I do!"

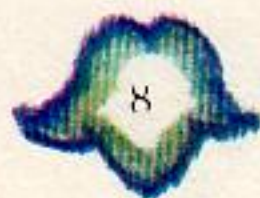
The eldest son meant what he said, but though the promise was made it was not kept. He went to the garden and sat down under the apple tree but instead of watching over it fell fast asleep!

The eldest of the three sons he was and his father's support, but he slept and snored and never saw the Fire-Bird appear as if out of nowhere on the very stroke of midnight and come flying into the garden. It gave a chirp and a twitter, cleared its throat and, choosing the ripest and best of the golden apples, plucked it and carried it off.

In the morning the tsar's eldest son woke, he looked at the apple tree, and—Oh, dear, of all things to happen!—one more of the golden apples was gone. What was he to do? What was he to say? If he said he had seen the thief but could not catch him it was bad. And if he told the truth and said that he had been asleep it was worse still!

He came into the palace and said to his father:

"O my tsar, my Father! I did not close my eyes the whole night through, but one of your golden apples is





gone. How it could have happened I do not know and cannot guess."

"That is bad!" said the tsar. "You are my eldest son and my support and I depended on you as on no one else to help me."

On the next night the middle son prepared to go out and keep watch.

"If the thief comes he shall not escape, I will catch him!" said he.

And off he went to watch over the apple tree.

A strong young man and a brave he was, just like his elder brother, but no less lazy. He came out into the garden, sat down on the soft grass and, feeling very warm and comfortable, fell fast asleep. And he never saw or heard anything.

Now, on the very stroke of midnight the Fire-Bird appeared as if out of nowhere, gave a chirp and a twitter, cleared its throat and, choosing the best and ripest of the golden apples, plucked it and carried it off.

It was morning when the tsar's middle son woke, and—Oh, dear, of all things to happen!—one of the golden apples was gone. He searched for it and he whistled and shouted, but it was gone and that was the end of it!

Into the palace came the tsar's middle son. He stood there before his father looking half-asleep still and said:

"O my tsar, my Father! One of your golden apples is gone, and though I never closed my eyes the whole night through but walked round and round the apple tree, I did not see the thief."



So much for the tsar's middle son who was his father's hope. He, it seems, could not be depended on, either.

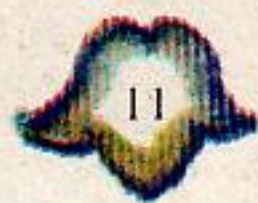
On the following night the youngest of the tsar's three sons, Tsarevich Ivan, was the one to go to the garden, and what else could he do!

He sat down under the apple tree, and, oh, how dark was the night, how warm the earth, and how soft the grass! Tsarevich Ivan began to feel drowsy. He closed his eyes and was about to fall asleep when all of a sudden he thought of his father the tsar weeping bitter tears under the apple tree and, loving son that he was, felt very sorry for him. He recalled what his father had said to him and asked him to do and was wide awake the same instant.

The night was pitch dark and, look hard as Tsarevich Ivan did, nothing whatever could be seen. But on the very stroke of midnight something flickered in the sky over the garden, there was a flash as of lightning, and everything around seemed aglow with flame. Tsarevich Ivan screwed up his eyes and covered them with his hand so as not to be blinded. But as soon as his eyes grew accustomed to the brilliance he saw that no fire raged near him and that the glow that lit up the garden came from the Fire-Bird which sat on a branch of the apple tree.

The Fire-Bird gave a chirp and a twitter, cleared its throat and, choosing the best and ripest of the golden apples, was about to pluck it, when Tsarevich Ivan, who had not lost his presence of mind and was ready and waiting for just such a moment, seized it with both hands! But the Fire-Bird broke free from his grasp and flew away, and Tsarevich Ivan was left holding one of its glowing, sparkling feathers.

Day had only just broken when he came back to the palace and the moment the tsar was awake went straight in to see him.









"O my tsar, my Father! I caught the thief but he broke free and got away!" he cried. "It is the Fire-Bird that has been stealing your golden apples, and here is one of its feathers to prove it."

He unfolded the kerchief in which he had wrapt the feather, and it lay there on his palm sparkling and glowing like a ray of sunshine and flooding the whole chamber with light.

Its brilliance took the tsar's breath away.

"You have served me well, my son, and many thanks to you," said he to Tsarevich Ivan. "Now we must think how we are to find the Fire-Bird."

He thought and he thought and then he sent for his two elder sons.

"My dear sons, my beloved sons!" he said. "If its feather is so beautiful what must the bird be like! Waste no time but saddle your horses and set out to seek it. Whichever of you finds the Fire-Bird and brings it to me alive will get

half my tsardom now and the rest of it after I die."

He blessed his two sons who set out on their way at once, and Tsarevich Ivan waited a day, and another, and on the third day he came to his father and began pleading with him to let him go after the Fire-Bird too.

"Am I not a son of yours like my two elder brothers?" he asked. "Why should you think me worse than them?"

The tsar felt sad, for he did not like to part with Tsarevich Ivan.

"My eldest son is my support, my middle son is my hope, and you, my youngest son, are my joy and comfort," he said. "Being young, you know nothing yet of war and battle. But there is no help for it, what is to be must be! Go, my son, and seek the Fire-Bird, and my blessings go with you."

Tsarevich Ivan saddled his horse and set out on his journey.

On and on he rode, and whether he was long on the way or not, whether he went far or near nobody knows, but he came at last to a wide field grown with





juicy green grass. And in that field was a huge stone with the following words inscribed on it:

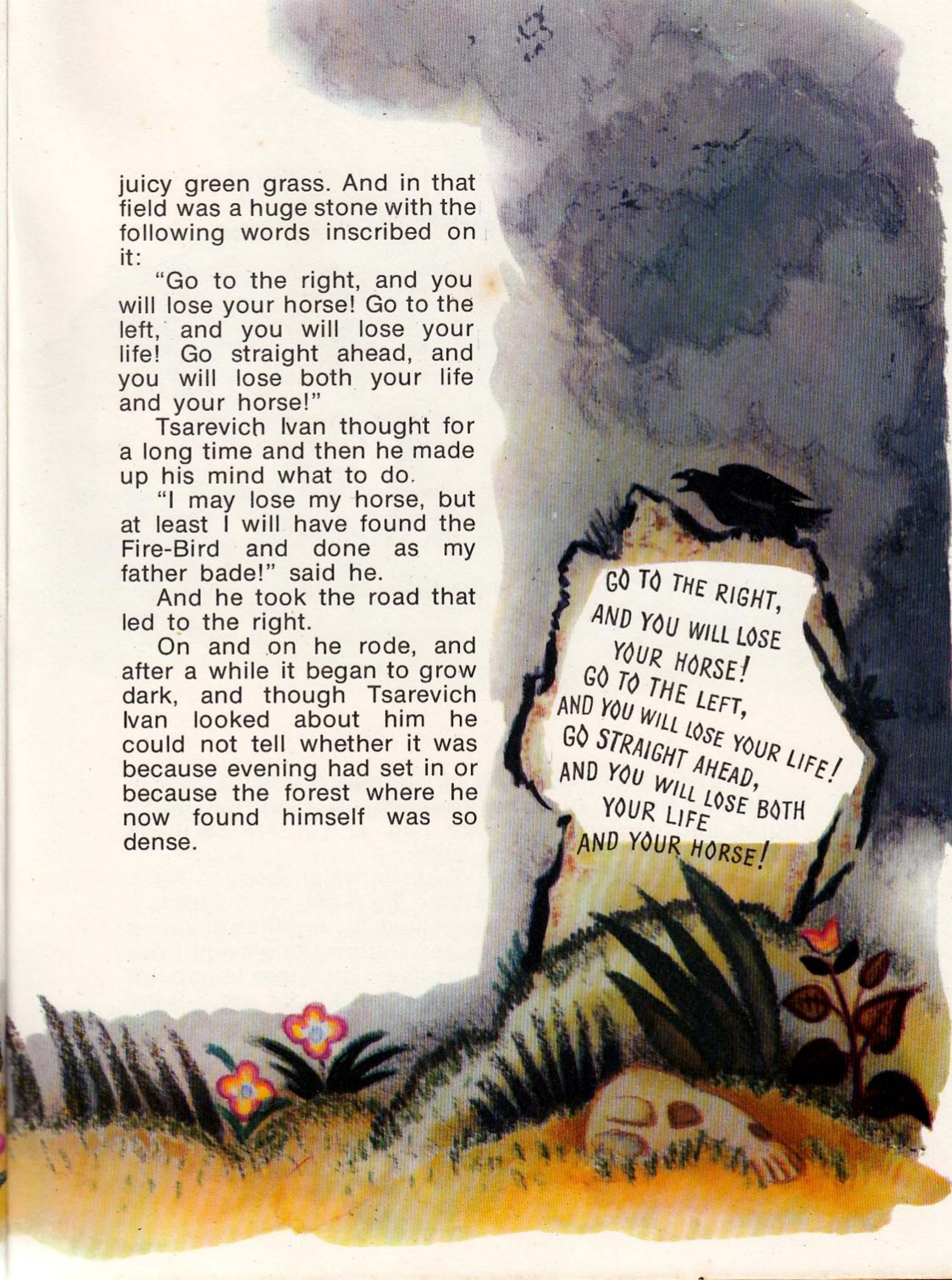
"Go to the right, and you will lose your horse! Go to the left, and you will lose your life! Go straight ahead, and you will lose both your life and your horse!"

Tsarevich Ivan thought for a long time and then he made up his mind what to do.

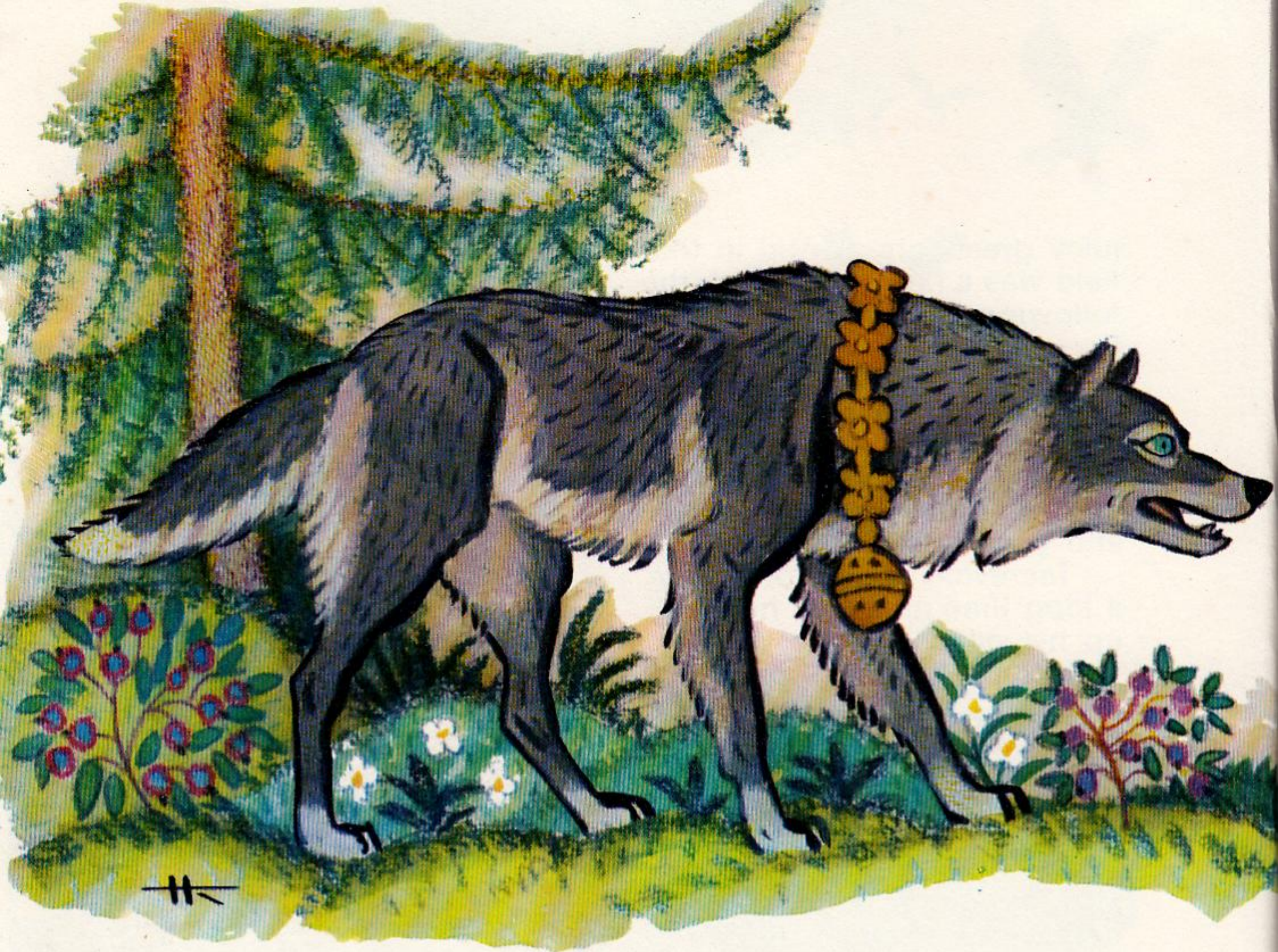
"I may lose my horse, but at least I will have found the Fire-Bird and done as my father bade!" said he.

And he took the road that led to the right.

On and on he rode, and after a while it began to grow dark, and though Tsarevich Ivan looked about him he could not tell whether it was because evening had set in or because the forest where he now found himself was so dense.



GO TO THE RIGHT,
AND YOU WILL LOSE
YOUR HORSE!
GO TO THE LEFT,
AND YOU WILL LOSE YOUR LIFE!
GO STRAIGHT AHEAD,
AND YOU WILL LOSE BOTH
YOUR LIFE
AND YOUR HORSE!



All of a sudden as if out of nowhere a great grey wolf appeared before him. He pounced on Tsarevich Ivan's horse and carried it off with him, and it was as if the earth had swallowed them both.

What was to be done? Tsarevich Ivan grieved for a time and wept bitterly and then he went on on foot.

He walked for a day, he walked for another day, and he walked for eight days more, and on the eleventh day he was quite worn out and sat down on a tree stump. He had no more strength to walk on, but he did not like the thought of going back.



All of a sudden as if out of nowhere Grey Wolf appeared. He ran out of the forest and up to Tsarevich Ivan and he said to him in a human voice:

"Greetings to you, Tsarevich Ivan! Why do you sit there with hanging head? Is it that life holds no joys for you? Or is it that you are afraid? Tell me where you are going and perhaps I can help you."

Tsarevich Ivan was glad to unburden his heart and he told Grey Wolf that it was the thought of the promise he had given his father to find the Fire-Bird that was troubling him.

"You have taken no easy task upon yourself, I must say," said Grey Wolf. "But do not despair. For I wish you well and will help you. So get on my back and hold tight!"

Tsarevich Ivan, wise young man that he was, and quick too, did not wait to be asked a second time. He sprang on Grey Wolf's back, and away went Grey Wolf in a flash! Higher he rose than the forest, faster he flew than the wind, in the wink of an eye hills and streams passed he by, and the meadows green with his tail swept clean.

Morning had not yet come or night ended and it was still very dark when Grey Wolf stopped by a stone wall.

"I have done my part, Tsarevich Ivan, and now it is for you to do yours," he said. "Make haste and climb over



this wall. There is a garden behind it and in the garden a golden cage with the Fire-Bird in it. Take the Fire-Bird but mind that you do not touch the cage or you will come to harm. Not only will you lose the Fire-Bird but your life as well."

Tsarevich Ivan thanked Grey Wolf and climbed quickly over the wall. He found himself in a garden, and it was bright day there in the middle of night, with the light coming not from the sun but from the Fire-Bird which glowed and sparkled in its golden cage.

The Fire-Bird's beauty filled Tsarevich Ivan with wonder. But there was no time to stand there marvelling. He opened the cage door, and the Fire-Bird perched on his hand.

"How will I carry it without a cage!" thought Tsarevich Ivan. "I have far to go and might rumple its feathers or harm it in some way, and that would be a terrible thing to happen."

In his joy he quite forgot Grey Wolf's warning and touched the cage. The same moment the silence was rent by a great blowing of trumpets, a ringing of bells and a whistling and droning as of the wind, and the guards came running. They seized Tsarevich Ivan, and the tsar of the realm appeared, and, stumping angrily up to him, shouted:

"How dared you take the Fire-Bird! Do you not hold your life dear? Or did you want to be put in a cage yourself?"

Said Tsarevich Ivan:

"My father is a tsar, sire, and the Fire-Bird has been visiting his garden and stealing his golden apples. So he sent me, his youngest son, to find it and bring it to him. We were cudgeling our brains trying to think why so beautiful a bird should want to turn thief. Well, now I know why, for there it sits in its cage with no feeding rack and not a wee little seed to peck."





The tsar flew into a rage.

"The Fire-Bird belongs to me, and it is not for you to say how I am to care for it!" he roared. "And if it hadn't pecked your apples I would have you put to death. As it is, I will pardon you if you do me a service first. Go



beyond the thrice-nine lands to the thrice-ten tsardom and fetch me the Horse with the Golden Mane. If you do this you will go free, and I will let you have the Fire-Bird besides. If you do not, I will cut off your head with my own sword."

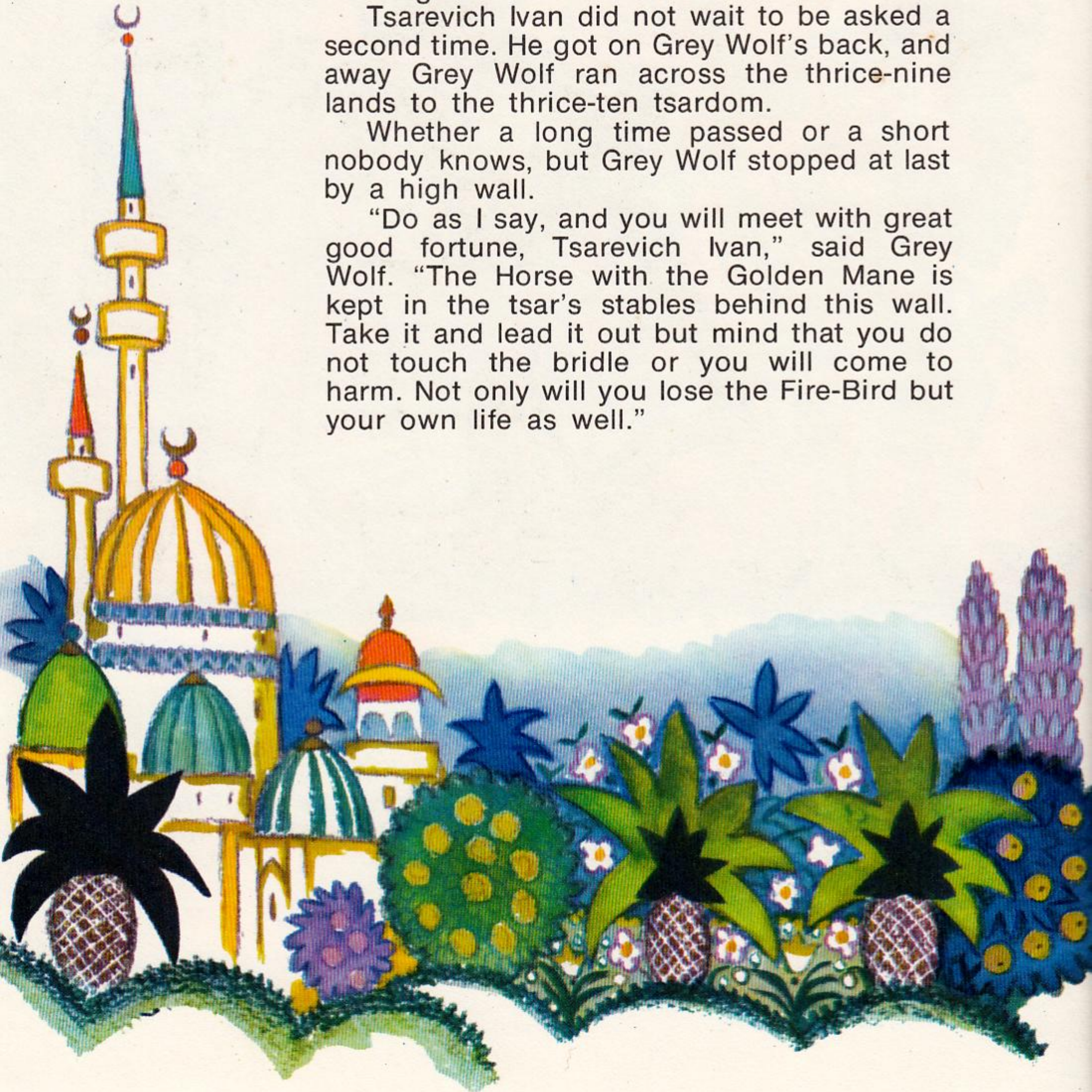
Tsarevich Ivan went back to Grey Wolf sad and crestfallen.

"Had you listened to me you would not have had reason to grieve so," Grey Wolf said. "But never mind. I am your friend and will help you this time too. Get on my back and hold tight!"

Tsarevich Ivan did not wait to be asked a second time. He got on Grey Wolf's back, and away Grey Wolf ran across the thrice-nine lands to the thrice-ten tsardom.

Whether a long time passed or a short nobody knows, but Grey Wolf stopped at last by a high wall.

"Do as I say, and you will meet with great good fortune, Tsarevich Ivan," said Grey Wolf. "The Horse with the Golden Mane is kept in the tsar's stables behind this wall. Take it and lead it out but mind that you do not touch the bridle or you will come to harm. Not only will you lose the Fire-Bird but your own life as well."





Tsarevich Ivan thanked Grey Wolf for both his counsel and the service he had done him and leapt over the wall. As soon as his feet touched the ground he glanced round him and saw the tsar's stables. They were built of layers of logs, each log so thick that it was all three men could have done to grasp it, and the door to the stables was made of iron and very heavy.

The door stood ajar, and Tsarevich Ivan hastened inside.

The sight that met his eyes made him stop short in wonder. For there before him stood a horse with a flaming mane of gold, his eyes glowing, his nostrils quivering, and his tail coiling behind him.



Tsarevich Ivan felt his heart move within him with joy. The horse strained towards him and touched his hand with his lips. "What a beautiful horse!" said Tsarevich Ivan to himself. "But how can I lead him out without his bridle!"

The bridle, which was of gold, hung on the stable wall, its beauty drawing the eye. Tsarevich Ivan reached for it, but the moment he touched it there was a great blowing of trumpets and a whistling and droning as of the wind, the ground trembled and shook with the stamping of many iron-soled boots, and the guards came running in. They waved their heavy swords and they bound Tsarevich Ivan with iron chains and marched him off to the tsar.

The tsar sat in a great hall which was more like a stone cave than a royal chamber and had torches hanging on its smoke-stained walls. The tsar's hair was grey and his eyes bulged, and instead of a crown he had on a cap of gold with a bull's horns on either side of it. An animal skin was thrown over his shoulders, and at his waist was a sharp knife. To the right of him stood a headsman with an axe and to the left of him was a block. Behind the tsar's throne, as if frozen to the spot, stood warriors clad in chain mail.

"So that's what you're like, Tsarevich Ivan!" said the tsar in thunderous tones. "There is nothing I need ask you, for I know all from my faithful spies. And unlike the tsar who sent you here, I am not one to be bought off with a mere horse. Choose! Either you bring me Elena the Fair who is held captive by none other than Koshchei the Deathless and get Golden Mane in reward or it's off with your head! Here's the block and here the headsman if you don't believe me. Ha-ha-ha!" And the tsar roared with laughter, for that was the way of him, and stared threateningly at Tsarevich Ivan.

Tsarevich Ivan never flinched.

"Well do I know that mine is the head and yours the







sword, tsar!" he said. "But bid your men set me free. I will go after Elena the Fair and try my luck."

Tsarevich Ivan came back to Grey Wolf sad and crestfallen and he told him what it was that had so grieved him.

"Why didn't you do as I said, Tsarevich Ivan!" said Grey Wolf. "What you faced before was as nothing compared to this. Ah, well, I will not leave you in your trouble. So put your trust in me but help your own self too. And now get on my back and hold tight!"

Tsarevich Ivan sprang on Grey Wolf's back, and away went Grey Wolf in a flash! Higher he rose than the forest, faster he flew than the wind, in the wink of an eye hills and streams passed he by and the meadows green with his tail swept clean.

Some time passed by, and they came to a strange place neither of them had ever heard of before.

"The time has come for us to part, Tsarevich Ivan," said Grey Wolf. "The way farther is closed to me. But I wish you well and will tell you what to do. Do you see that path yonder? Follow it and you will see two strange little men, two wood goblins. Hide from them and watch them a while at first and then go after them and don't fall behind. Whatever they find will be yours if only you offer them something in return. And have no fear. If you talk to them kindly you will find them easy enough to deal with."

Tsarevich Ivan did as Grey Wolf told him and followed the path he showed him which was so narrow that it could hardly be seen.



All of a sudden there ahead of him he saw two strange-looking little men with heads like cones. They were not old, but their hair was grey and it was brushed any which way and the jackets they wore had no buttons and were wrapt around them. And to top it all, they had no brows and no lashes either and their eyes were bright green! As they walked along they kept muttering something, and Tsarevich Ivan listened and was soon able to make out that it was two words repeated over and over again: "Found-lost, found-lost, found-lost!"

"Wood goblins, that's what they are!" said Tsarevich Ivan to himself.

He watched them from a distance at first and then, careful not to let himself be seen, followed them.

The goblins walked on muttering the same strange words and breaking now and then into loud laughter that echoed through the forest. But after a time they stopped and began to argue, one of them shouting "It's mine!" and the other "No, mine!" and each trying unsuccessfully to pick up something that lay on the ground. Tsarevich Ivan, who was watching them closely, soon saw that it was a sword made of the best watered steel and so fine as to make a great warrior proud to own it.

The goblins went on arguing.

"Let's divide it!" cried one. "Let's!" cried the other. "You take the blade and I'll take the handle!" cried one. "No, *you* take the blade and *I'll* take the handle!" cried the other.

Tsarevich Ivan stepped out from behind a tree.

"Hullo there, friends!" he called. "What do you need the sword for when there's no one for you to slay? And what good is a blade without a handle or a handle without a blade? Let me try out the sword. Who knows—perhaps it was made to fit my hand and forged to suit my strength!"

He lifted the sword and waved it once, and an age-old spruce tree fell to the ground; he waved it a second time, and a pine so thick that it was all three men could have done to encircle it with their arms was cleft in two. And heavy as was the sword it seemed very light to him.

"This is a sword after my own heart!" said Tsarevich Ivan. "It's no burden to the hand and a joy to use!"

At this the two goblins began whistling loudly and clapping their hands very hard. Their hair stood on end, they looked angry, and it was clear that they were not at all ready to give up the sword.

Tsarevich Ivan knew that he must do something quickly if he was to get it for himself.

He took off his coat and jacket, turned them both inside out and put them on again. The goblins stopped whistling and clapping and stood there watching him.

Tsarevich Ivan stooped and picked up two cones from the ground.

"Don't be afraid, I'm not one to treat anyone unfairly," he said. "I'll take the sword but you can have the cones. Here's a spruce cone for one of you and a pine cone for the other!"

The goblins took the cones, looked at each other with round green eyes and walked away, muttering as they passed through the trees, "Found-lost, found-lost, found-lost!..."

No sooner were they out of sight than there was Grey Wolf! He appeared as if out of nowhere and came running near.

"Well done, my lad, you've passed your first test!" said he to Tsarevich Ivan. "But that is only half the deed,





and the whole still waits to be done! So listen to me, for I wish you well and will tell you what to do. Before you set out to seek Koshchei the Deathless you must learn where his death is to be found. Take this road, follow it for three days and three nights and you'll come to a hut on chicken's feet. Say to it 'Little hut, little hut, stand as once you stood, with your front to me and your back to the wood,' and it will do so. Go inside then, and you'll find Baba-Yaga the Witch, a Withered Old Crone with a Leg of Stone, there. Baba-Yaga rides around in a mortar, uses a pestle for a whip and sweeps away the tracks with a broom, and she knows many, many things. She will be angry at first when she sees you and will want to eat you up, but if you tell her that I sent you she will stop being angry and will tell you where to find Koshchei's death. And now be off with you!"

And with that Grey Wolf vanished.

Tsarevich Ivan walked for a day, he walked for another day, and he walked for a third day, and he came at last to a dark, dense forest where the moss rustled, the bark on the trees whistled, and the owls sat on the branches and hooted. Tsarevich Ivan looked, and there before him stood a hut on chicken's feet with no doors or windows.

"Little hut, little hut, stand as once you stood, with your front to me and your back to the wood," said Tsarevich Ivan, and the hut turned its front to him and its back to the forest.

Tsarevich Ivan came inside, and whom did he see there but Baba-Yaga the Witch, a Withered Old Crone with a Leg of Stone. She lay on the stove top as she always did, her nose pressed to the ceiling and her tangled hair sweeping the floor and hanging over the threshold.

"Fee-fo-fum!" said Baba-Yaga loudly. "Russian flesh! Russian blood! Never before was it seen or heard of in these parts. And now it comes of itself into my hut and begs to be eaten!... Well, now, my lad, speak out and tell me: is there something you are out to do?"



"There is indeed, Grandma," Tsarevich Ivan replied. "And I bring you greetings from Grey Wolf who is my friend and helpmeet."

"Why didn't you say so in the first place!" said Baba-Yaga, softening. "Grey Wolf is a kinsman of mine. And now tell me whether you are here of your own free will or at someone's bidding."

"That is not easy to reply to, Grandma," said Tsarevich Ivan. "I am here at my own free will and at another's bidding too." And he told her all about everything.

"What a task you have set yourself, never was there a harder one!" said Baba-Yaga. "But morning is wiser than evening. So go to bed now, and tomorrow I will help you."

And she gave him food and drink and put him to bed.



On the next morning Tsarevich Ivan was up early, he washed himself clean, and Baba-Yaga said to him:

"In the middle of the ocean-sea lies the Island of Buyan, and on that island grows a mighty oak. In the oak there is a door made of steel and weighing a hundred poods. Open this door, go inside, and you will see a chest. Now, in the chest there is a hare, in the hare a duck, and in the duck an egg, and it is in this egg that Koshchei's death is hidden. Once the egg is in your hands you can face Koshchei without fear and go to his castle, there is a road there that leads straight to it. But don't keep your hand far from your sword, for there is no knowing what may happen!"

Tsarevich Ivan heard out Baba-Yaga and set out on his way.

Whether he walked far or near and whether he was long on the way or not nobody knows, for a tale is quick in the telling but a deed is slow in the doing, but after a while he left the forest behind him and found himself on the shore of the sea. Now, just at that very instant a young pike was flung out onto the shore by a wave, and Tsarevich Ivan saw it and said to himself that this was very nice indeed, for it was high time he had something to eat. He reached for the pike, but all of a sudden a wave rose on the water and an old pike, a huge silver one, its body covered with slime, appeared and said in a human voice:

"Spare my son, Tsarevich Ivan, and I will do you a good turn too some day!"

"Oh, well, I can't very well refuse!" said Tsarevich Ivan, and he threw the young pike into the sea.

"You have done me a great kindness, Tsarevich Ivan," said the old pike, "and I will do you one in return. I have lived here for three hundred years and three months and I have seen much and heard even more. I know where you are going without your telling me. Look at the sea and you

will see an island there shaped like a pancake. That is the Island of Buyan, and I will help you to get to it."

The pike dived into the water and turned round in it, and a ripple ran over the sea. It turned round again, and the sea rose up in waves. Then the waves fell back, and there was the pike forming a kind of bridge between the shore and the island.

Tsarevich Ivan walked across it and out onto the island and was soon deep in a great, thick forest where grew a mighty oak that had a door of forged steel in it. Tsarevich Ivan tried the door, but it did not open; he knocked, but no one replied. He put his shoulder to the door and pushed hard once, but the door stayed closed; he pushed it hard a second time, and it swayed; he pushed it a third time, and it opened and nearly flew off its hinges!





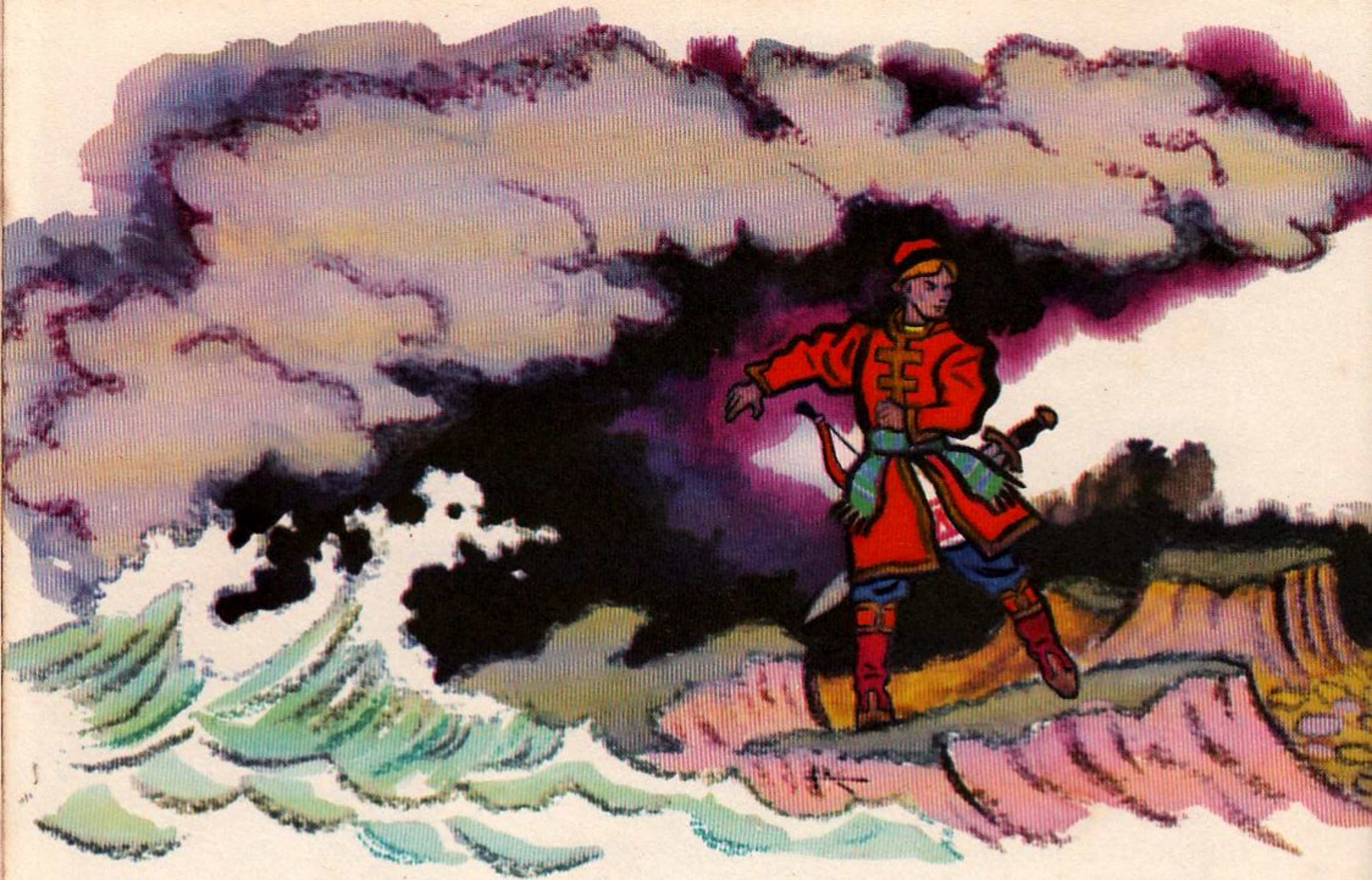
There was a cave inside, and Tsarevich Ivan let himself down into it. The cave was large and high-ceilinged and its walls sparkled and played, for they were set with gems and pearls. Deep in the cave stood a chest, and Tsarevich Ivan did not pause to look at the treasures about him but lifted the chest and carried it out into the light of day. He placed it on the ground and raised the lid, and out jumped a hare. He cut the hare in two with his sword, and out flew a duck. He shot an arrow, and it hit the duck, and the duck dropped the egg which fell into the water!

Tsarevich Ivan threw up his hands in dismay, for how was he to get the egg now!

Just then light ripples passed over the sea, and the young pike stuck his head up out of it.

"You spared my life, Tsarevich Ivan," said he, "and I will give you in return a toy egg I have found, for I have nothing else."





And he held out to Tsarevich Ivan the very egg he had dropped and in which Koshchei's death was hid.

Tsarevich Ivan did not know how to thank the young pike enough he was so happy. Using the old pike's back for a bridge again, he returned to shore and made straight for Koshchei's castle.

The day was growing shorter, night was drawing nearer, and all of a sudden Tsarevich Ivan heard someone puffing and snorting. He looked about him, and there were twelve lights burning brightly high overhead and twelve other lights glowing like embers close to the ground.

Tsarevich Ivan stopped still and gazed ahead, trying to pierce the darkness. What he saw made him start in fear



and back away, for there before him lay a hideous twelve-headed dragon. Six of the dragon's heads slept and six were awake. The six that slept rested on the ground, the twelve eyes in them glowing softly; the six that were awake were raised high, the twelve eyes in them burning brightly.

Tsarevich Ivan felt that the breath had gone out of his body. He was all alone, and the heads were many, and they all breathed fire and could burn him to cinders. In the darkness behind the dragon he could just make out the outlines of a huge castle which rose skyward like a cliff and was surrounded by a courtyard as big as a city. In that castle, he knew, lived Koshchei the Deathless who held Elena the Fair captive.





It was then that Tsarevich Ivan recalled what Baba-Yaga had told him in parting—that he was not to keep his hand far from his sword. He walked fearlessly up to the twelve-headed dragon, and the six heads that were awake turned towards him and the six jaws opened wide, but before any of them could let out so much as a hiss or had had time to send their fiery breath into his face, he waved his sword and cut them all off!



But the six heads that lay asleep on the ground opened their twelve eyes and asked drowsily:

"Is it time for us to mount guard?"

"High time!" Tsarevich Ivan cried.

And the moment the six heads rose from the ground he cut them down with one wave of his sword like so many cabbage heads.

"And now, Koshchei, you and I are going to fight, and we'll see who gets the better of whom!" said Tsarevich Ivan, and he made his way to the palace.

He came inside and whom should he see sitting there and weeping bitter tears but Elena the Fair! Such was her loveliness as tongue cannot say or story tell, and Tsarevich Ivan could not help himself and fell in love with her.

Elena the Fair saw Tsarevich Ivan and she stop-

ped crying for the first time in all the days she had been held captive and showed her pearl-white teeth in a smile.

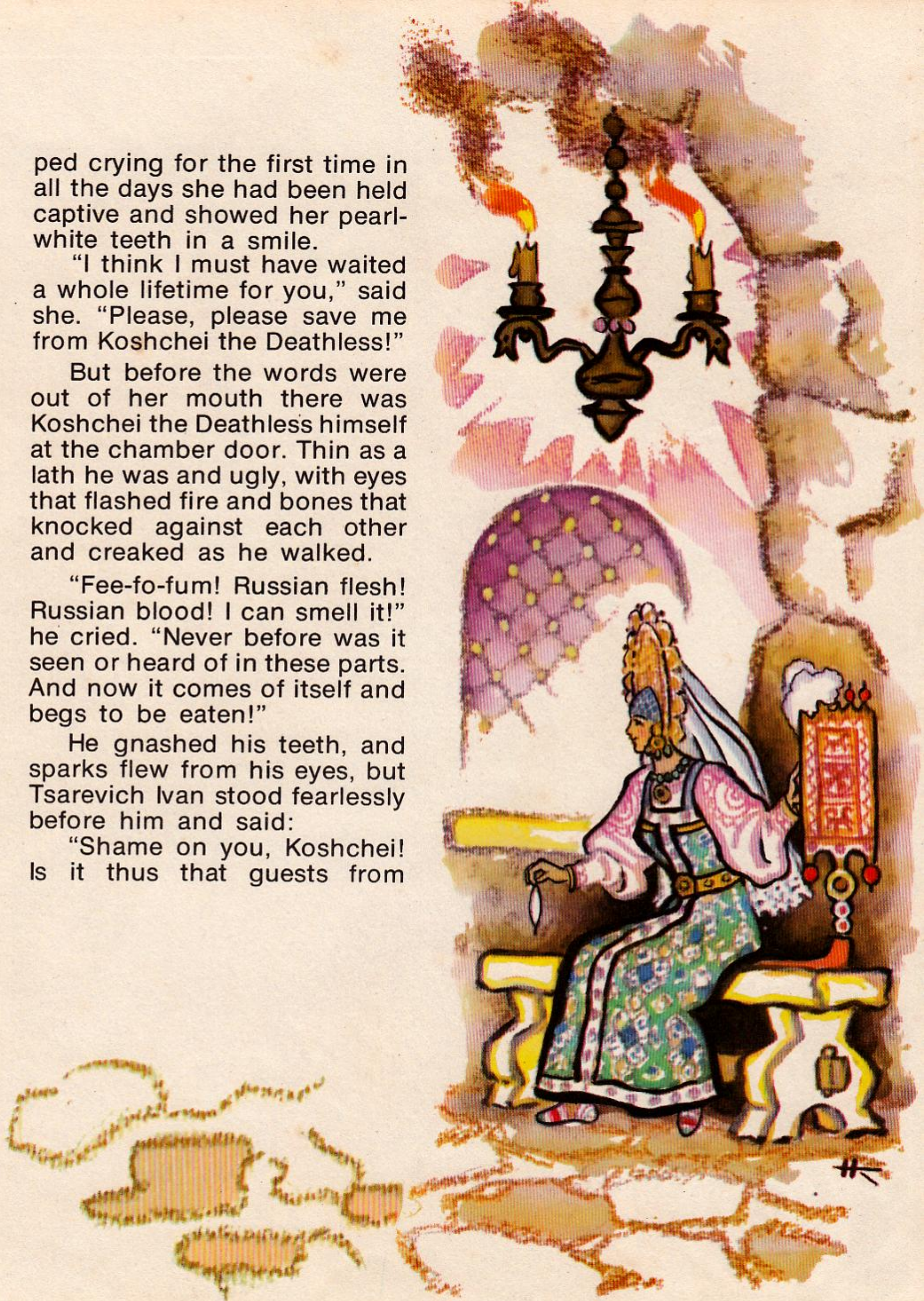
"I think I must have waited a whole lifetime for you," said she. "Please, please save me from Koshchei the Deathless!"

But before the words were out of her mouth there was Koshchei the Deathless himself at the chamber door. Thin as a lath he was and ugly, with eyes that flashed fire and bones that knocked against each other and creaked as he walked.

"Fee-fo-fum! Russian flesh! Russian blood! I can smell it!" he cried. "Never before was it seen or heard of in these parts. And now it comes of itself and begs to be eaten!"

He gnashed his teeth, and sparks flew from his eyes, but Tsarevich Ivan stood fearlessly before him and said:

"Shame on you, Koshchei! Is it thus that guests from









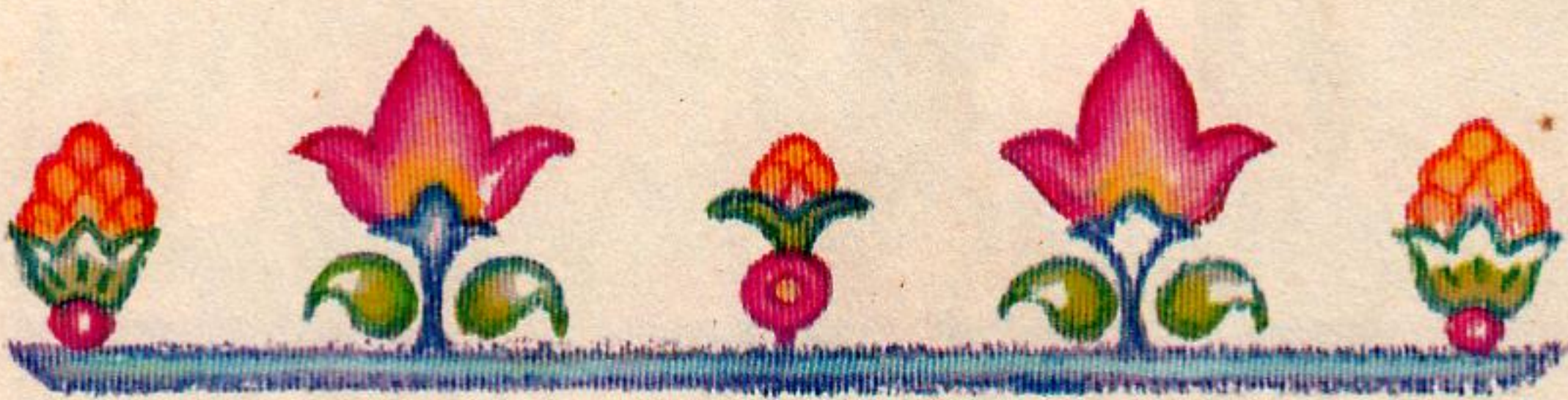
far-off parts are welcomed? Is it meet to raise one's voice at them and call them names? I will teach you how to behave! Shorter by a head will I make you! Come, now, tell me what this is." And he took from his bosom the egg in which Koshchei's death was hid.

At the sight of it Koshchei grew silent.

Tsarevich Ivan rolled the egg from one hand to the other, and Koshchei reeled and fell. Tsarevich Ivan stood there playing with the egg, and it was just as if Koshchei was being played with, for he was forced off his feet and flung from one end of the room to the other.

But Koshchei was not cowed nor was he frightened. There was an evil gleam in his dark eyes and a look in them that seemed to say: "Wait, Tsarevich Ivan, you gloat too early, you have not got the better of me yet!" He gathered together all of his strength, spread out his thin, claw-like hands and prepared to pounce on Tsarevich Ivan and seize him. And if Tsarevich Ivan let this happen he would die, and so would his father the tsar, his heart broken at the loss of his favourite son, and as for Elena the Fair, she would languish in captivity to the end of her days.

At the thought of his father, the sudden stupor that had come over Tsarevich Ivan vanished, and the evil spell cast on him by Koshchei the Deathless was broken as if by magic. He threw the egg he was holding forcefully downward, and from where it hit the ground rose a blinding pillar of black smoke. and, passing through the ceiling, soared skyward. The smoke was slow to disperse and fade away, but when it had and



Tsarevich Ivan was able to look about him he saw that Koshchei the Deathless was gone. He and his castle and the mountain on which it had stood had all vanished just as if they had never been, and the evil power that had been his was no more.

And Tsarevich Ivan and Elena the Fair found themselves in the very same spot in the forest where Tsarevich Ivan had parted with Grey Wolf. They stood there holding hands and looking into each other's eyes, and they could not have their fill of looking!

All of a sudden who should appear before them as if out of nowhere but Grey Wolf.

"I have been waiting for you for a long time, my friends," said he, "and I must say you have been very lucky so far. And now get on my back and I will carry you off with me!"

Tsarevich Ivan and Elena the Fair got on Grey Wolf's back, and away went Grey Wolf in a flash! Higher he flew than the forest but lower than the clouds, and he carried them beyond the thrice-nine lands to the thrice-ten tsardom and only stopped when they reached the selfsame wall they had been at before.

Seeing it, Elena the Fair burst into tears.

"I will not have anyone save you, Tsarevich Ivan!" said she between sobs. "I would rather die than marry the hateful old tsar with the horns."

Said Tsarevich Ivan to Grey Wolf in pleading tones:

"You have done me many a service, Grey Wolf, pray do me another. Tell me how I am to save my beloved from the horrible fate that awaits her."



“Never fear, Tsarevich Ivan, the wicked old tsar shall not have Elena the Fair!” Grey Wolf replied. “I will do everything myself, but I’ll need your help. Take me to the palace and leave me there, and as soon as Golden Mane is in your hands, get on his back together with Elena the Fair and ride away. I will catch up with you later.”

He rolled over on the ground, and lo!—there he was in the shape of Elena the Fair and looking so much like her that no one could have told them apart.

Tsarevich Ivan took him by the hand and led him into the palace, and there was the tsar, his grey locks stealing from under his golden cap, running up and down the



hall and shouting and roaring at the top of his voice. Seeing Elena the Fair, he was overjoyed and ordered Golden Mane to be brought in. He gave the horse to Tsarevich Ivan and had him thrown out of the palace, and as soon as he and Golden Mane were out of sight, bade his musicians play, his servants wave their torches, and his courtiers dance to the music.

"I am as strong as I am wise and none can get the better of me!" said the tsar boastfully to Elena the Fair. "Do you love me, fair one? Say that you do!"

"I do!" Elena the Fair replied.

"Let us kiss, then!"

The tsar bent over Elena the Fair, but instead of her honeysweet lips his lips met a wolf's bristly muzzle! And before he could recover from the shock and call to his guards and servants Grey Wolf had jumped out of the







window and taken to his heels. He caught up with Tsarevich Ivan, bade him get off Golden Mane's back and on his own, and away they rode, with Elena the Fair following them on Golden Mane.

Higher than the forest rose Grey Wolf, faster he flew than the wind, in the wink of an eye hills and streams passed he by and the meadows green with his tail swept clean, and Golden Mane kept up with him and never fell behind. Try as the tsar's guards did and do what they would, they could not overtake them!

On and on they rode, and Tsarevich Ivan said:

"Never will I forget what you did for me, Grey Wolf, for I am a happy man because of you, but the time has



now come for me to think of my father and do as he bade me. I can see we are nearing the place where the Fire-Bird is being kept captive."

But though the very thought of parting with Golden Mane was more than he could bear he said not a word about him.

Grey Wolf, however, needed no prompting.

"I know what is in your mind and will help you, Tsarevich Ivan," he said. "Take me instead of Golden Mane to the tsar, and you shall see what you shall see."

He rolled over on the ground, and lo!—there he was in the shape of Golden Mane and looking so much like him that none could have told them apart.



Seeing Tsarevich Ivan riding up to him on Golden Mane, the tsar was overjoyed. He ran out to meet him and gave him the cage with the Fire-Bird in it.

"Take the bird and be off with you!" said he. "I do not want it. It feeds on nothing but golden apples, and I am made to answer for its thieving ways!"





Tsarevich Ivan wasted no time. He took the cage, rejoined Elena the Fair and rode off with her on Golden Mane's back.

The tsar feasted and made merry for three days before preparing to ride Golden Mane for the first time. His servants saddled the horse, and as the people stood about and watched him, the tsar got on the horse's back and rode out into the fields. He had just put him into a gallop when lo and behold!—Golden Mane, who had been waiting for just such a moment, changed his shape and turned suddenly into Grey Wolf. The tsar was sent rolling to the ground, and, oh, what a sight he made sitting there and rubbing his eyes and being quite unable to understand what had happened!

How the people laughed! They laughed till they cried, and they haven't stopped laughing to this day and will break into fresh peals of laughter at the very thought of the tsar as they saw him then. And if you don't believe me, ask them to tell you about it and you'll soon be in stitches yourself!



And as for Grey Wolf, he waved his tail and was off in a flash! He soon caught up with Tsarevich Ivan and Elena the Fair and ran on at Golden Mane's side.

After a time they reached the spot where Grey Wolf had snatched Tsarevich Ivan's horse from him, and Grey Wolf stopped and said:

"It was here we met, Tsarevich Ivan, and it is here we are fated to part. I have served you faithfully and truly, but now I can serve you no more."







"Ah, Grey Wolf, never did I think of you as my servant!" said Tsarevich Ivan. "What you did you did out of friendship, and I have come to love you like a brother and cannot bear to part with you! Now that we have done all the many things we set out to do, we should be feasting and making merry!"

"Say not so, Tsarevich Ivan!" said Grey Wolf. "You have not yet brought your bride into your house or put Golden Mane in your stables, and your father still awaits the Fire-Bird, so it is too early for you to boast of having done your father's bidding or carrying out to the end the task you set yourself. Not for nothing is it said that beginning a task is hard but finishing it is harder still. And now goodbye and do not forget me!"

And with that Grey Wolf vanished.

Tsarevich Ivan felt very sad, but there was nothing to be done, so he and Elena the Fair climbed on Golden Mane's back and set out for home together.

As fast as the wind they rode, the earth trembling and the sparks flying from under Golden Mane's hoofs, and by and by they came to a great wide field and the meadows lone where, once seen by all, stood a great big stone. Only now the stone was not there and though they scanned the field they did not see it anywhere.

"It's a big field and a wide one, and perhaps I have made a mistake and it is not here the stone was," said Tsarevich Ivan. "But it is time for us to rest just the same."

He put Elena the Fair to bed in a tent, and unsaddling Golden Mane, let him graze in freedom, and himself lay



down at the entrance to the tent. He was soon asleep and he did not see or hear his two elder brothers come riding up.

While he had been out in search of the Fire-Bird, they had been feasting at a roadside inn, and, having foolishly wasted all the money their father had given them, were now returning home with nothing to show for it.

And now lend an ear and listen well, good folk, for a wicked thing it was that happened next.

If only Tsarevich Ivan had stayed awake!... But, then, who could have known how it would all turn out!

The two elder brothers rode up to the tent, and lo!—there lay Tsarevich Ivan beside it fast asleep, with Golden Mane nibbling at the grass nearby.

Much surprised were they at the sight of him and looked inside the tent, and there was Elena the Fair lying on a couch, her cheeks rosy and her long lashes quivering as she slept. And—Oh, wonder of wonders!—over her hung a golden cage with the Fire-Bird glittering and glowing in it.

The brothers were seized with envy. They talked it over between them and made up their minds to kill Tsarevich Ivan.

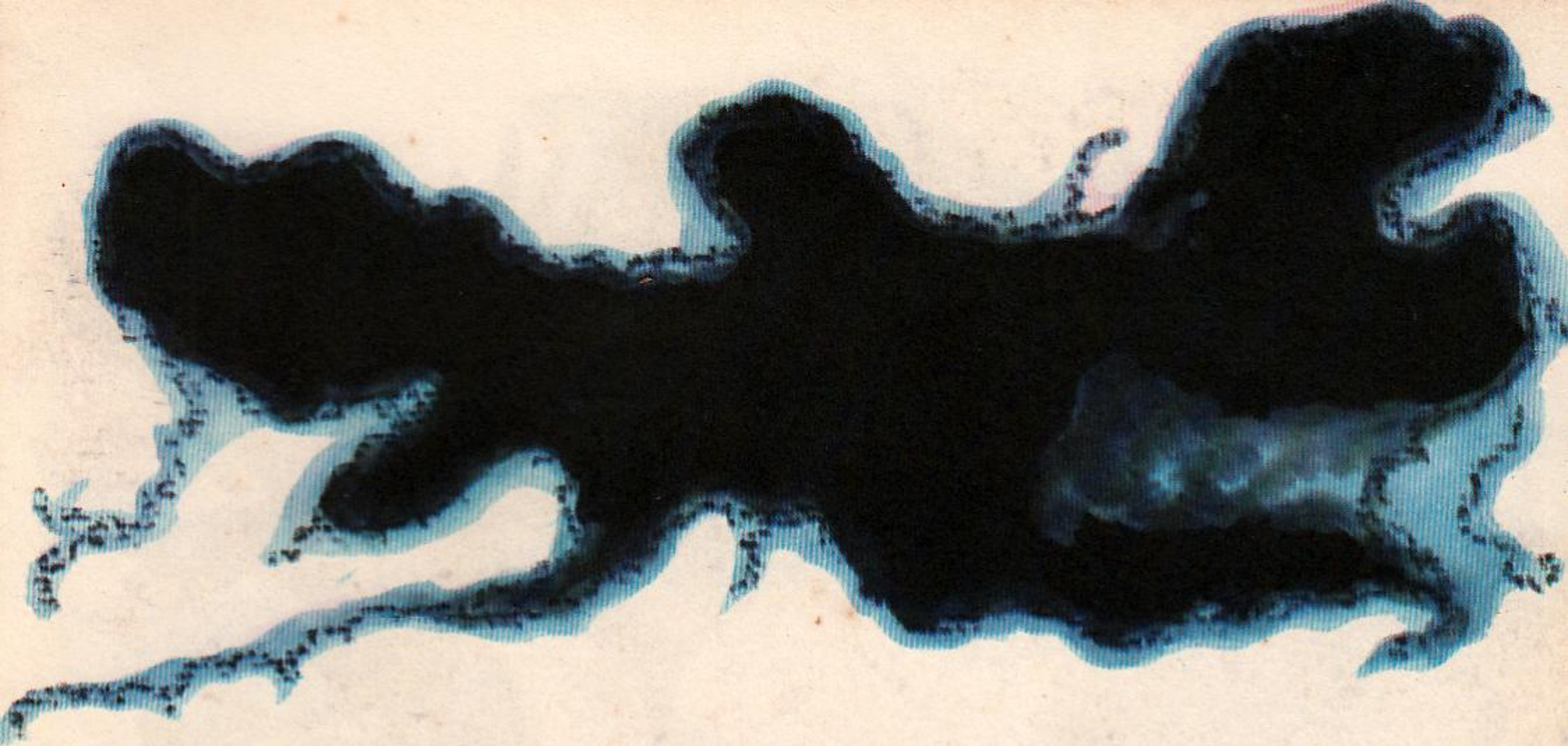
“If we don’t do it, Tsarevich Ivan will get half the tsardom now and the rest after our father dies,” said they. “This way, we shall have it all for ourselves!”

And they decided that Elena the Fair was to go to the elder brother, Golden Mane to the middle one, and the Fire-Bird to their father, and when he died—well, if need be they could cast lots for it.



Their plans made, the brothers killed Tsarevich Ivan and took Elena the Fair captive, warning her that if she gave them away they would kill her too. And getting on Golden Mane's back, they set out for home, with no other thought than to boast of a prowess that was not theirs, make use of things that did not belong to them, and revel in a happiness they had no right to.

On rode the brothers, and Tsarevich Ivan was left to lie in the wide field for ravens to feast on.





The ravens were not long in coming. One of them was an old raven, and the other a young one. They wheeled over Tsarevich Ivan and, coming down slowly, were about to peck out his eyes when all of a sudden as if out of nowhere Grey Wolf appeared. He saw Tsarevich Ivan lying there dead and the ravens wheeling over him, and as soon as the young raven lighted on Tsarevich Ivan's breast, snap!—he seized him, pinned him to the ground and held him fast.

The young raven burst out crying, and the old raven who was the father of the young one began begging Grey Wolf to let him go.

"Please, Grey Wolf, spare my son, and I will do for you whatever you desire," he said. "He is my only son and very dear to me."



"Well, now, that sounds reasonable," said Grey Wolf. "Just fetch me some dead and living water, Raven, and I will let your son go!"

The old raven flapped his wings and away he flew he alone knew where to fetch the dead and living water.

Some time passed by, and he came back bringing two vials, one with dead and the other with living water.

Grey Wolf took the first vial and sprinkled the dead water over Tsarevich Ivan, and lo!—all his wounds healed. Then he took the second vial and sprinkled him with the living water, and Tsarevich Ivan woke, stretched and rubbed his eyes.

"Oh, what a long sleep I have had!" he said.

"But for me you would have slept on and never wakened, Tsarevich Ivan," said Grey Wolf. "Your brothers killed you while you slept, and then the elder brother took Elena the Fair for himself, and the middle brother took Golden Mane. And as for the Fire-Bird, they decided to let your father have it and to cast lots for it after his death. So if you do not want to be late for your elder brother's wedding, for he is soon to marry Elena the Fair, don't delay but get on my back and I will take you there!"

Tsarevich Ivan got on Grey Wolf's back, and away they went in a flash! Higher than the forest flew Grey Wolf but lower than the clouds, in the wink of an eye hills and streams passed he by and the meadows green with his tail swept clean.

They arrived at the old tsar's palace just when the older brother was about to marry Elena the Fair and the feast to begin.

Now, a wedding is a happy event usually, but this one was not. The bride wept, the Fire-Bird kept mum and did not utter a note, and Golden Mane neither ate nor drank. And though the tables were set and the food ready and



waiting, the old tsar walked about in a daze and could not understand what was going on around him.

It was then that Tsarevich Ivan and Grey Wolf stole quietly into the throne room together and hid behind the curtains.

Elena the Fair saw them, and she stopped weeping and smiled happily.

The Fire-Bird saw them and began to sing.

And Golden Mane saw them, and he struck the ground with his hoof and began to munch his hay.



Tsarevich Ivan and Grey Wolf waited no more. They stepped out from behind the curtains and showed themselves to all. And Elena the Fair rushed into Tsarevich Ivan's arms.

"Here is my own true bridegroom!" she cried.





The two wicked brothers were frightened. They turned white and stood there shaking like leaves in the wind.

When he had learned the truth, the tsar was greatly angered.

"A fine state of affairs!" he cried. "What am I to do? How shall I punish my elder sons?"

Said the tsar's counselors:

"The sons of a tsar should not be beaten, nor should they be chained. Give them their freedom, tsar, for today is no ordinary day but your younger son's wedding day!"



The tsar did as his counselors said. He ordered his sons to be set free and he gave them leave to go where they would.

The feast now began. No need was there to make wine or mead, for the tsar had both in plenty and everything else besides, and this being a wedding, he spared nothing!

Tsarevich Ivan made a handsome bridegroom, and Elena the Fair a lovely bride, and Grey Wolf acted as godfather and gave the bride away.

I was present at the feast and, truth to tell, had mead to drink and ale as well, and I heard them toast Grey Wolf and thank him for all he had done for them. And Tsarevich Ivan took him by the hand and begged him to stay with him always.





"You were a loyal friend to me when I was in trouble, Grey Wolf. Would you leave me now when I am so happy?" he said.

And Grey Wolf could not say very well no to that, so he stayed in the palace and they all lived there together very happily.

Now, the tsar was getting to be very old and would often feel sleepy, so he spent much of the time dozing on a bench beside the palace. And the business of ruling the realm he passed into the good hands of Tsarevich Ivan who had Grey Wolf to help and advise him.

But after a time Grey Wolf felt homesick and wanted to go back to the forest again.

What was Tsarevich Ivan to do?

He thought and he thought and then he said:

"You once said to me, Grey Wolf, that beginning a task is hard but finishing it is harder still. So do me and the whole of the people a service and take upon yourself the telling of the tale of Tsarevich Ivan and Grey Wolf. Who but you is to do it!"

Grey Wolf was pleased.

He moved his chair up to his desk, took up a pen and began making up fairy tales and setting them down on paper. And he liked it so much that he has been doing it ever since!







THE TALE OF TSAREVICH IVAN
AND GREY WOLF

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